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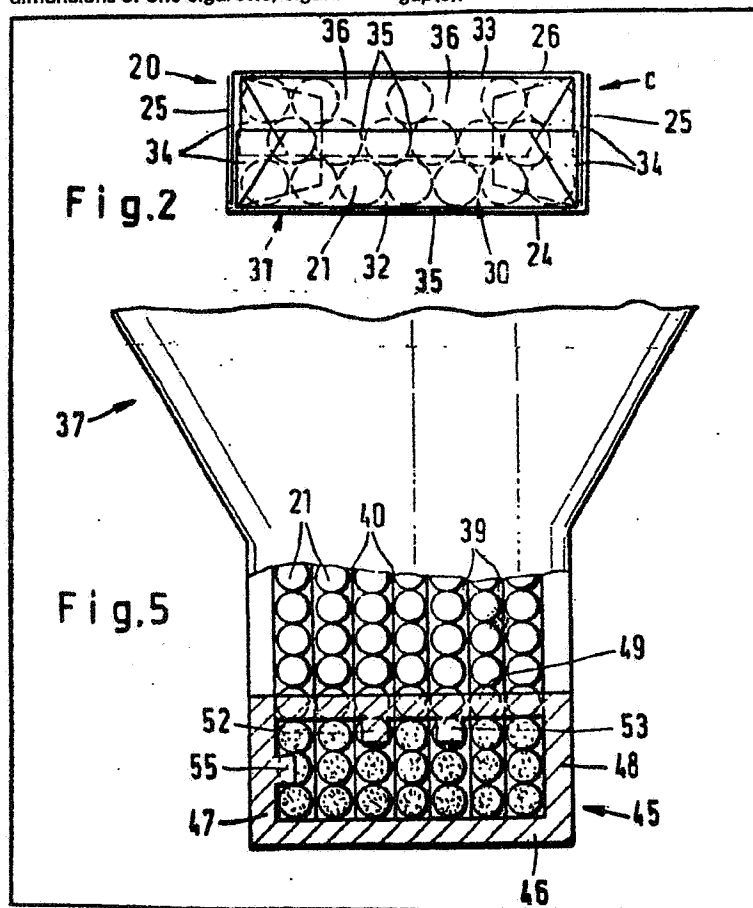
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(54) Cigarette packet together with process and appliance for producing same

(57) Cuboidal packet, made of a comparatively rigid packaging material, especially a hinge-lid packet, for receiving a group of cigarettes, cigarillos or the like in three layers in which. One layer is staggered with respect to the others, at least one layer possesses n cigarettes, cigarillos or the like and one further layer possesses n-1 cigarettes, cigarillos or the like or fewer, is characterised that in an outermost layer, one or more gaps are provided, which in each case is bounded by two cigarettes, cigarillos or the like and have two dimensions of one cigarette, cigarillo

or the like. The group is enclosed by an inner wrapper 31 (a piece of pre-cut foil), which has, on one side, a removable flap 35. The outermost layer is located on the side opposite the flap.

In a process for producing a group of cigarettes, cigarillos or the like for the packets, the gaps are formed in that layer of the group which is on top when the group is pushed out of a magazine 37, and the group is turned, before the packing operation, through 180° so that the layer with the gaps is pointed downwards. The outlet of the magazine is provided with internal projection(s) or lug(s) 52, 53, 55 inhibiting the feed of cigarettes at positions corresponding to the desired gap(s).



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The drawings originally filed were informal and the print here reproduced is taken from a later filed formal copy.

This print takes account of replacement documents later filed to enable the application to comply with the formal requirements of the Patents Rules 1978.

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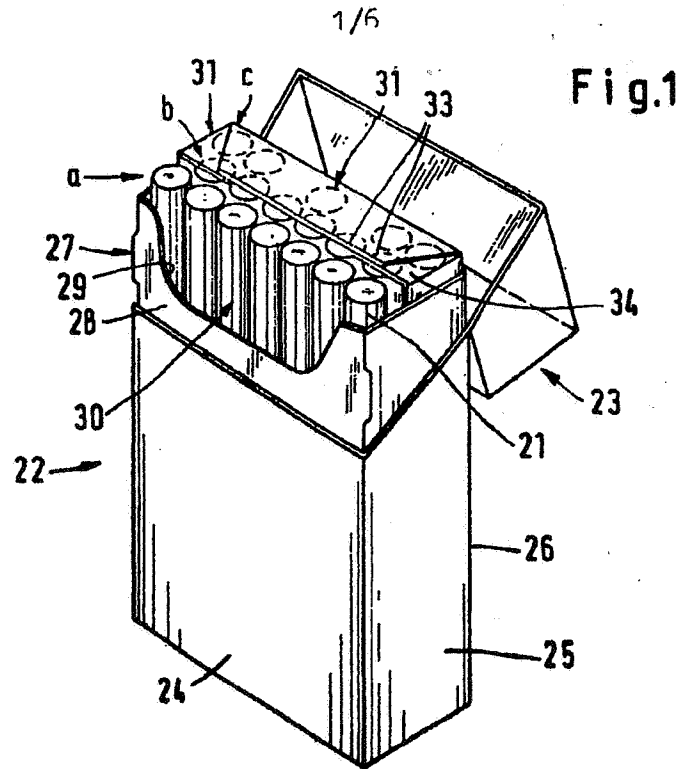
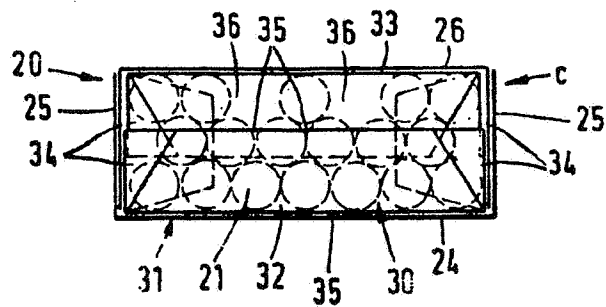


Fig.2



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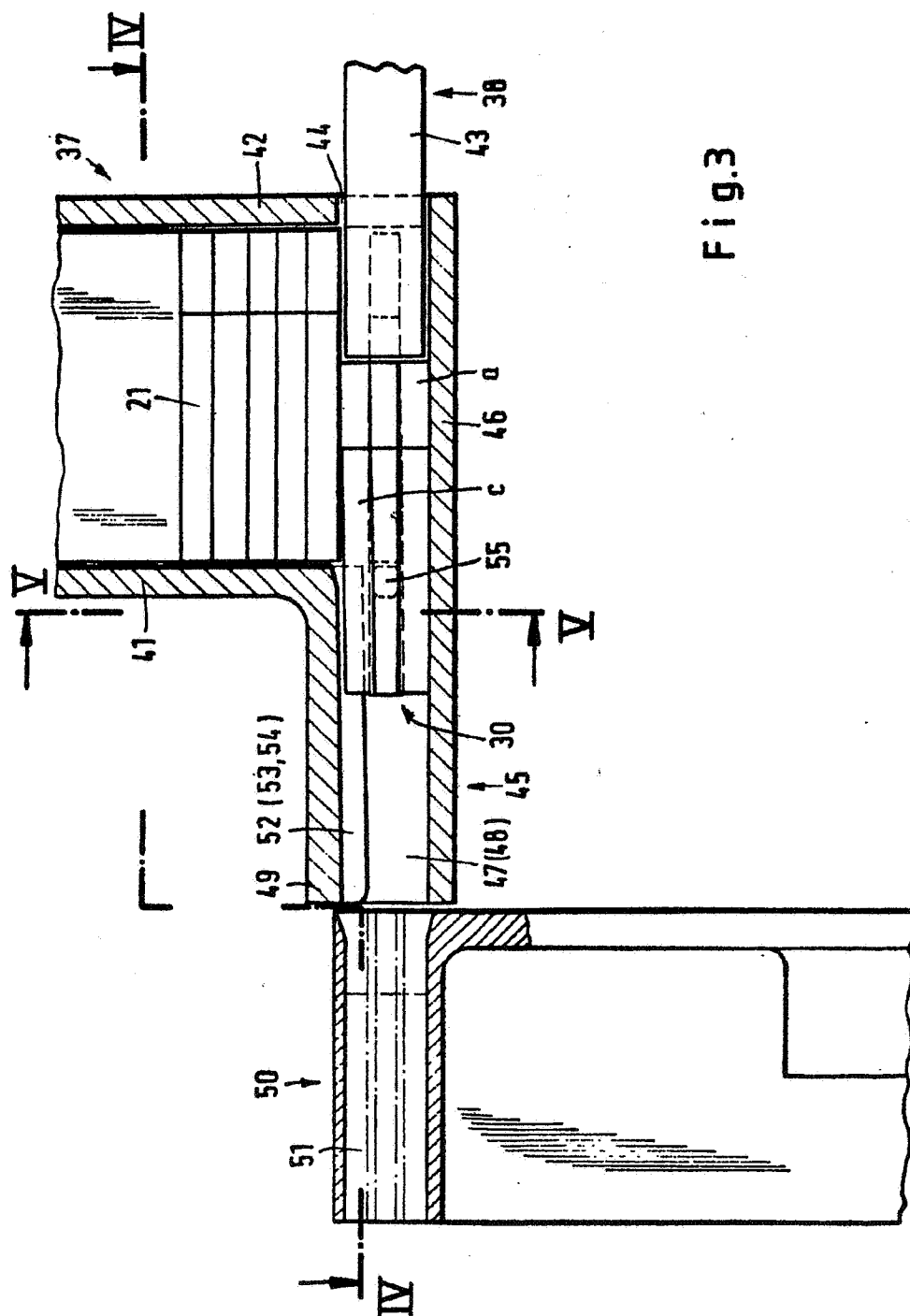
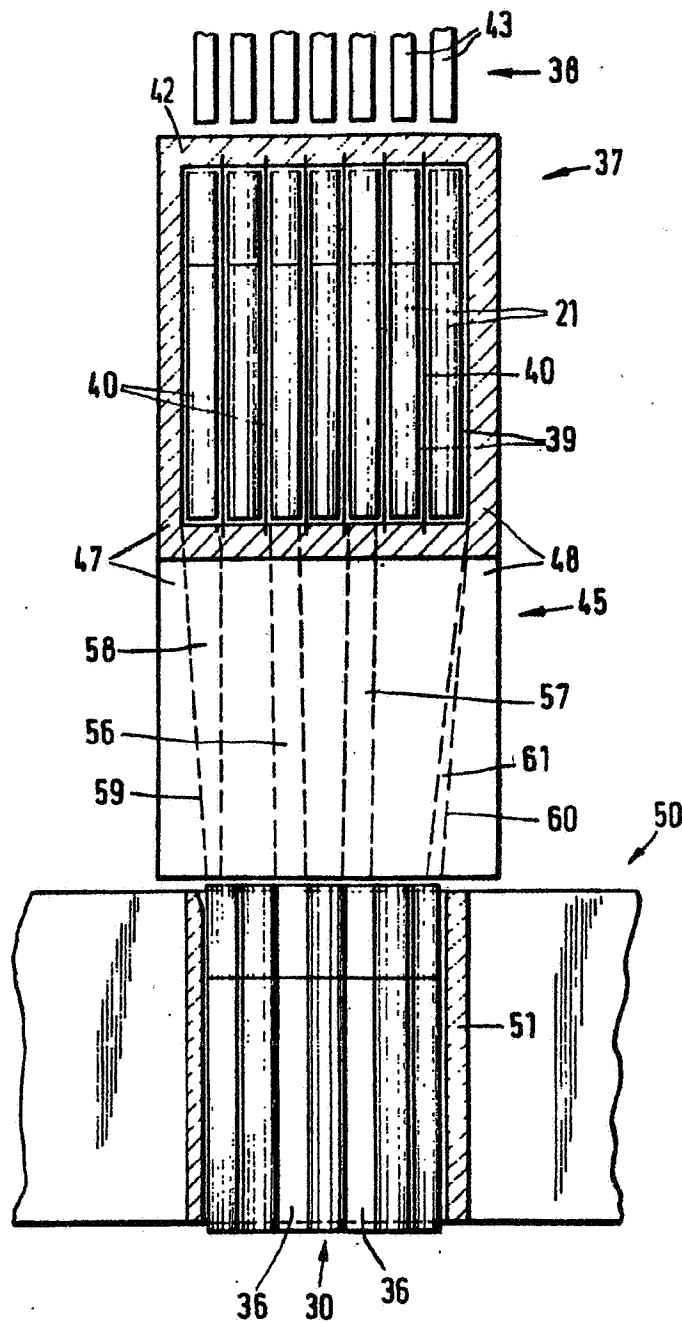


Fig.4



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Fig.5

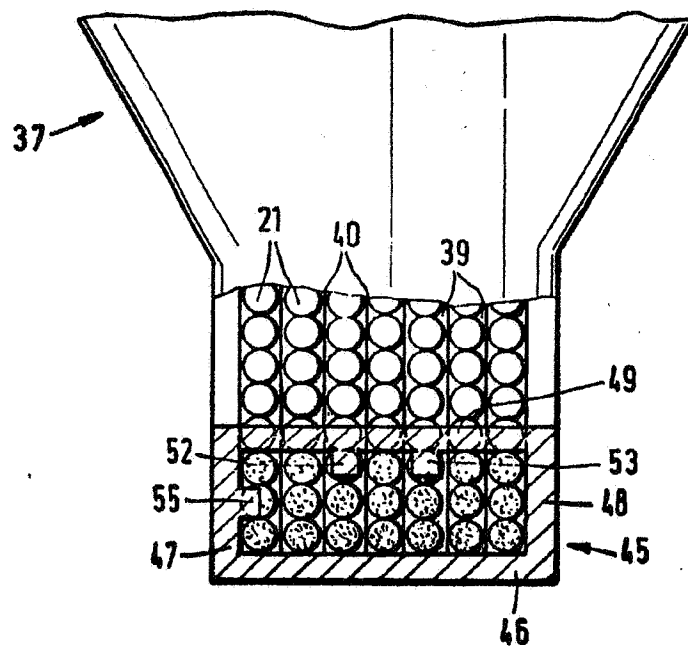
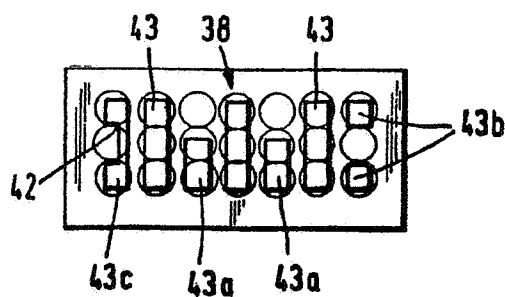


Fig.6



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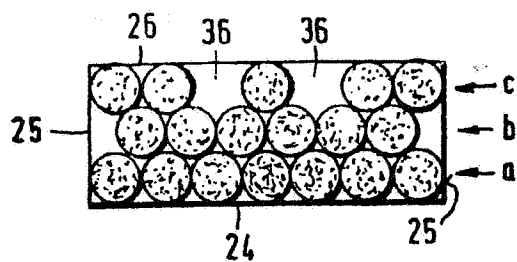


Fig.7

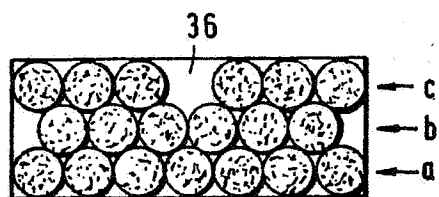


Fig.8

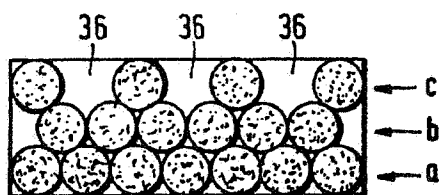


Fig.9

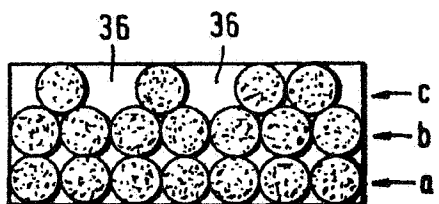


Fig.10

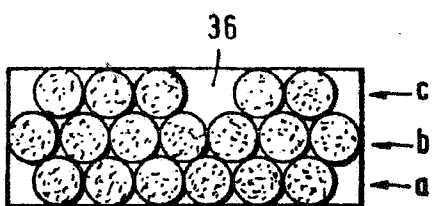


Fig.11

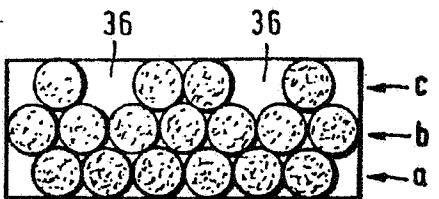


Fig.12

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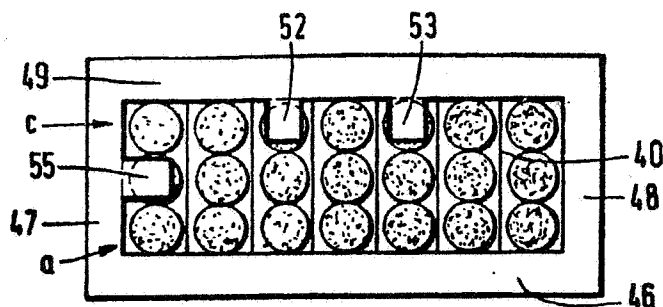


Fig. 13

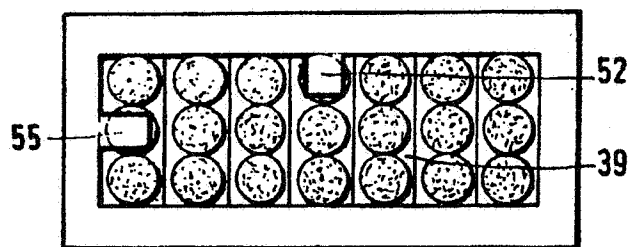


Fig. 14

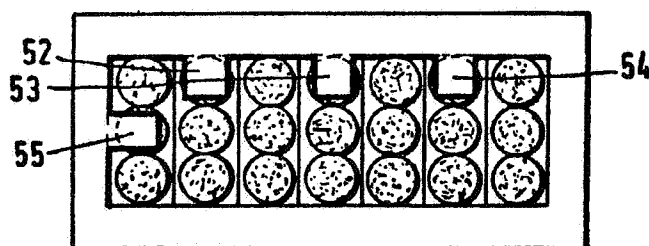


Fig. 15

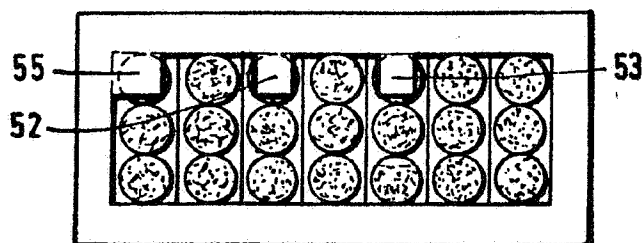


Fig. 16

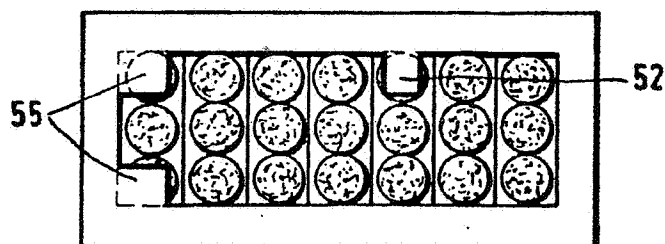


Fig. 17

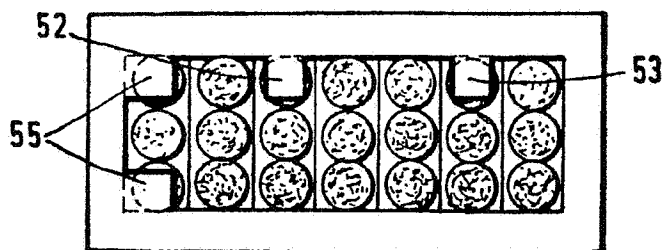


Fig. 18

SPECIFICATION
Cigarette packet together with process and application for producing same

The invention relates to a cuboidal packet, made of a comparatively rigid packaging material, especially a hinge-lid packet, for receiving a group of cigarettes, cigarillos or the like in three layers, of which one layer is staggered with respect to the others, and furthermore, at least one layer possesses n cigarettes and one further layer possesses $n-1$ cigarettes or fewer, in a manner such that, in the layer in question, gaps are formed, which in each case are bounded by two cigarettes and have the dimensions of one cigarette, the group being enclosed by an inner wrapper (a piece of precut foil), which possesses, on one side, a removable flap. The invention further relates to a process and an appliance for producing packets of this type.

The cigarette industry is continually faced with the problem of varying retail prices for packets of cigarettes. The cost fluctuations result in part from the manufacture of the cigarettes, but principally from the varying tax component. The retail prices of the cigarettes must be adjusted accordingly. This leads to the necessity of altering either the retail price of a packet of cigarettes or the contents of the packet. There are limits in both cases, since many devices, especially cigarette vending machines, are set up for particular dimensions of the cigarette packets.

German Auslegeschrift 2,616,219 sets out to deal with the problems resulting from the fluctuating relationships mentioned above. The proposed solution is to reduce the number of cigarettes in relation to the volumetric capacity of the cigarette packet. The appearance of the solution actually indicated is that a group of cigarettes formed, as is generally usual, by three layers, as the contents of a packet, exhibits one or two gaps in the central layer, as a group reduced by one or two cigarettes. This known proposal starts from the assumption that the cigarettes are arranged, within the group, in a definite formation, namely in the so-called "saddle position". In this arrangement, the cigarettes are staggered from layer to layer, in a manner such that each cigarette is in contact with two cigarettes in the adjacent layer.

This known proposal gives rise to problems, especially relating to production technology, since, during the process of assembling the group of cigarettes, it is exceptionally difficult to form the proposed gaps by machine at the prescribed points within the central layer.

The object underlying the invention is to propose a packet, especially for cigarettes, together with a process and an appliance for producing same, which avoid the disadvantages of the state of the art and, above all, give rise to no problems relating to production technology in the process of forming groups which contain gaps (missing cigarettes). Furthermore, the packet according to the invention is intended to exhibit a

greater latitude for the number of cigarettes to be assigned to a group.

To achieve this object, the packet according to the invention is characterized in that the outer layer located on the side opposite the flap exhibits gaps, which are caused by missing cigarettes.

In the case of the invention, the gaps formed by missing cigarettes are accordingly formed in an outer layer, at the rear. In the case of the preferred embodiment of the invention, namely in the case of a hinge-lid packet, this layer faces a rear wall of the packet, to which a hinged lid is articulated.

A first essential advantage of this formation of the groups, by the process according to the invention, resides in the fact that the design of an inner wrapper of the group (a piece of precut foil) results in a flap facing the front surface of the packet, this flap being capable of being pulled off, and being arranged and dimensioned in such a manner that, after it has been pulled off, the upper region of the group of cigarettes is exposed, at the front, up to approximately half its extent. This means that the front layer is completely visible, and the central layer is visible to approximately half its extent. In contrast, the rear layer, that is to say the layer facing the rear wall of the packet, remains covered by the inner wrapper, namely by an end-flap of this wrapper. As a result of this, the gaps in the formation of the group are not immediately recognisable on opening the packet. The impression of an incompletely filled Packet is avoided.

A further essential advantage resides in the production of the packets. The groups of cigarettes are conventionally formed by being pushed out of a cigarette magazine. Gaps arise in the formation due to the holding-back of individual cigarettes during this pushing-out operation by projections (lugs) which protrude into the path on which the cigarettes move. In the case of the invention, it is possible to attach projection or lugs of this type exclusively to those boundaries of the cigarette magazine which are located on the outside, i.e. not to the extremely thin shaft walls of the cigarette magazine which are located between individual upright rows of cigarettes, and which can support only light loads.

It is additionally possible, during the operation of pushing the group out of the cigarette magazine, for the layer with the gaps to be formed on the top. When the group is subsequently turned round (in a cigarette turret), the layer with the gaps finishes up on the underside of the group. As a result, the positioning of this layer satisfies the condition imposed by the machine for producing the hinge-lid packets, namely that the front of the group must face upwards, for reasons concerned with production technology. Only by this means is it possible to place a separate piece of precut material in position on the top of the group, in order to form a collar.

The appearance of the process according to the invention for producing packets of this type is that the layer with the gaps is formed on the top,

during the operation of being pushed out of a cigarette magazine, and the complete group is thereafter turned through 180°.

The appliance according to the invention operates in conjunction with a known cigarette magazine, which forms, in the lower, delivery region, a plurality of magazine shafts, which are in each case partitioned off one from another by very thin shaft walls. A number of cigarettes corresponding to the group are pushed, in three layers, one above another, from the magazine shafts, this operation being performed by an appropriately designed pusher, the so-called "hand". A conveying passage for the group adjoins, according to the invention, the region of the magazine from which the cigarettes are pushed out. Ribs are formed in this passage, as portions or as continuations of projections (lugs), these ribs stabilising the formation of the group, in which the gaps are included. A cigarette turret adjoins the conveying passage, this turret revolving in a plane aligned at right angles, for the purpose of receiving one group in each pocket.

Further features of the invention relate to the design of the packet and/or the group, as well as to the appliance for producing same.

In the text below, illustrative examples of the invention are explained in more detail by reference to the drawings, in which:

Figure 1 shows an opened hinge-lid packet, with cigarettes, represented in a perspective view, Figure 2 shows a closed packet of cigarettes in horizontal projection, or plan view,

Figure 3 shows the lower portion of a cigarette magazine, with adjoining elements for conveying the cigarettes, in vertical section,

Figure 4 shows a horizontal section through the appliance according to Figure 3 in the plane IV—IV,

Figure 5 shows a vertical section through the appliance according to Figure 3, in the plane V—V;

Figure 6 shows a diagrammatic representation of a pusher (hand), for pushing out a group of cigarettes,

Figures 7 to 12 show various formations of cigarettes within a group in a packet, looking at the cigarettes end-on,

Figures 13 to 18 show representations of the exit or pushing-out region of a cigarette magazine, with lugs in the arrangements corresponding to the formations of cigarettes according to Figures 7 to 12, likewise looking at the cigarettes end-on.

The preferred field of application of the invention is represented in the drawings, namely the configuration and production of hinge-lid packets 20 for cigarettes 21.

The hinge-lid packet 20 usually comprises a packet body 22 and a lid 23, which is hinged to this body. The packet body 22 forms the front wall 24, the side walls 25, and the rear wall 26. In the region of the rear wall 26, the lid 23 is integrally connected to the packet body 22 with the formation of a "pivot axis". A collar 27 is

inserted into the packet body 22, this collar being formed from a separate piece of precut material, which is attached, by gluing to the front wall 24 and the side walls 25 of the packet body 22. The collar is designed with a cutout 29 in the region of its front wall 28. When the hinge-lid packet 20 is in the closed position, the lid 23 encloses that portion of the collar 27 which projects from the packet body 22.

A group 30 of cigarettes 21 is contained inside the hinge-lid packet 22 which is designed in the above manner. This group of cigarettes is enclosed by an inner wrapper, in particular by a piece 31 of precut foil.

The piece 31 of precut foil (or an inner wrapper composed of another material) is customarily folded around the group 30 in such a manner that longitudinal endflaps 32 and 33 are formed in the region of the upper end face, these flaps pointing in the transverse direction and partially overlapping each other. The lateral regions are covered by lateral endflaps 34, which are folded inwards.

In order, on starting to use a cigarette-packet of this type, to obtain access to the cigarettes, the piece 31 of precut foil is provided with a flap 35 which can be removed by pulling off. This flap comprises either a separate piece of precut foil or is connected to the remaining portion of the piece 31 of precut foil by easily tearable residual connections. Pulling off this flap 35 exposes a region extending over the full width of the hinge-lid packet 20, and of the group 30, and corresponding in depth to approximately half the area of the end surface (see Figure 1). Approximately half of the group 30 is thereby exposed, in the upper region and on the front of the hinge-lid packet 20, on the side remote from the hinged lid 23. That region of the group 30 which faces the rear side (articulation of the lid 23) remains covered by the piece 31 of precut foil even in the region of the end face, due to the presence of the longitudinal endflap 33. The other longitudinal endflap 32 has been removed, together with half the lateral end-flaps 34, and the flap 35.

The group 30 is composed of three layers a, b, c of cigarettes. The formation, within the group, of the cigarettes 21, is selected in such a manner that two layers, a and b are complete, that is with cigarettes closely packed side by side, while the third layer, c which faces the rear of the hinge-lid packet 20 possesses a lower number of cigarettes and accordingly exhibits one or more gaps 36, each corresponding to the space requirement of one cigarette 21. These gaps 36 enable the contents of a cigarette packet, that is to say the number of cigarettes, to be reduced, without thereby altering the external volume of the packet, in particular of the hinge-lid packet. Locating the gaps 36 in the layer c, at the rear, and thus facing the hinge-point of the lid 23, results in this layer being covered; even after the packet has been opened and the flap 35 has been removed. The layers a and b (figure 1) which are

visible when the packet is first used are composed of complete rows of cigarettes without gaps.

In addition, locating the gaps 36 in the rear layer c entails advantages relating to production technology.

5 The groups 30 are formed by ejecting an appropriate number of cigarettes 21 from the lower portion of a cigarette magazine 37, the cigarettes being ejected together, in the
10 longitudinal direction, by means of a pusher 38. In the lower region, the cigarette magazine 37 comprises, in a known manner, a plurality of upright magazine shafts 39, located side by side. The cigarettes 21 are located in these shafts, in
15 upright rows, with continuous replenishment from above. The magazine shafts 39 are partitioned off one from another by very thin shaft walls 40. The lower region of the cigarette magazine 37, from which region the pushing-out process takes place, 20 comprises a number of magazine shafts 39 which equals the predetermined number of cigarettes located side by side within a group 30. The cigarette magazine is, or the magazine shafts 39 are, covered by transversely aligned side walls 41, 25 42 at the ends of the cigarettes 21.

The pusher 38 comprises a number corresponding to the number of magazine shafts 39 of long, web-shaped fingers 43, each of which enters a magazine shaft 39, and combs out, from
30 this shaft a number of cigarettes 21 corresponding to the height and/or the shape of the finger 43. For this purpose, the side wall 42 is provided, in the lower region, with an aperture 44 for the entry of the pusher 38.

35 The group 30 thus pushed out of the cigarette magazine 37 enters a conveying passage 45, which directly adjoins the cigarette magazine 37. This conveying passage is closed around its periphery, and accordingly comprises a bottom
40 wall 46, which is continuous as far as the side wall 42 of the cigarette magazine 37, side walls 47 and 48, and an upper wall 49.

A cigarette turret 50 adjoins the free, open end of the conveying passage 45, this turret revolving
45 in a transverse plane. This turret comprises a plurality of pockets 51, which are open at the opposite ends, and into which the pusher 38 pushes, in each case, one group 30, in a continuation of the movement of the conveying
50 passage 45. The cigarette turret 50 conveys the group 30 through a travel of 180°, and then pushes it out of the pocket 51 again, on the lower side, opposite to the side on which it was received. The group 30 has thereby been turned
55 through 180°, so that the layer c which originally pointed upwards, is then turned downwards, resting, for example, on a conveyor track (not represented).

To form the gaps 36 in the layer c, which faces
60 upwards when the group is pushed out of the cigarette magazine 37 individual cigarettes 21 are, in each case, held back in the corresponding magazine shafts 39. For this purpose, projections or lugs, 52, 53 and 54, are arranged on the exit
65 side of the magazine shafts 39, these projections

or lugs protruding into these shafts. The size of these projections or lugs is sufficient to hold back the cigarette 21 in question, against the pushing-out movement. In contrast, the adjacent
70 cigarettes can be conveyed away freely.

The formation of the gaps 36 in an outside layer enables the lugs 52, 53 and 54 to be attached to a boundary which is likewise on the outside and, in consequence of this is particularly
75 stable. In the present illustrative embodiment, the entry end of the conveying passage 45 forms a peripherally closed "mouthpiece" for the group 30 which is to be pushed off (hatched regions in Figure 5). The lugs 52, 53 and 54 are received by
80 the stable walls, in particular by the upper wall 49.

In the illustrative embodiment shown, an inward-projecting lug 55 is additionally provided in the region of one of the side walls 47, this lug
85 holding back a cigarette 21 of the central layer b.

In the present illustrative embodiment, the lugs 52, ... 55 are ends of projecting ribs 56, 57 and 58, which extend in the longitudinal direction inside the conveying passage 45, and serve,
90 during transport through this section as "space-keepers" for preserving the gaps 36 which have been formed. The formation which is preset when the group 30 is pushed out is thereby preserved during this conveying operation. The rib 58 is
95 attached to the side wall 41 of the conveying passage 45, as a continuation of the lug 55. Corresponding projections and ribs can also be fitted in the region of the pockets 51 of the cigarette turret 50.

100 Locating the gaps 36 in an outer layer of the cigarettes permits a large number of formations within a group. Preferred illustrative embodiments are represented in Figures 7 to 12, Figures 13 to 18 showing in each case, the corresponding
105 configuration of the cigarette magazine 37, in the region of the entry to the conveying passage 45.

The number and position of the gaps 36 must be selected in such a manner as to ensure that the group 30 is stable, that is to say to ensure that the formation is preserved up to the time at which the packet starts to be used. The stability of the shape of the hinge-lid packet 20, which is customarily made of thin cardboard, plays an important part in this regard. The gaps 36 must be arranged in such
115 a manner that adjacent cigarettes 21 are supported either against one of the walls of the hinge-lid packet 20 and two cigarettes of the adjacent layer b, or against two mutually perpendicular walls and one (staggered) cigarette in the layer b. By this means, up to three gaps 36
120 can be formed in a layer c. Furthermore, the alternative formations for the layers, known in practice are possible, namely the staggered (saddle) arrangement or the one-on-one arrangement (Figure 10), in which, however, the cigarettes in the layer c is provided with gaps 36 are staggered with respect to those in the layer b. Furthermore, these formations, which are likewise known based on the number of cigarettes in each
130 layer are also possible. The usual formation with

seven cigarettes in the outer layers a and c (both without gaps) and six cigarettes in the central layer b can also be produced, as can the alternative with six cigarettes in the outer layers a and c and seven cigarettes in the layer b.

Examples of the firstmentioned formation are represented in Figures 7, 8 and 9. As can be seen, up to three gaps 36 can be formed in the layer c, but without any gap being bigger than the space which is assigned to one cigarette. In these formations, a cigarette occupies each of the corners of the packet formed by the rear wall 26 and the side walls 25, supported by a cigarette in the central layer b, the latter being staggered with respect to the cigarette in the corner. Complete layers a and b each with seven cigarettes, permits only two gaps in the rear layer c.

The capability of the packet to retain its shape plays a part in the case of the design according to Figures 11 and 12, because no cigarettes are present at the corners of the packet. In this six/seven/six formation up to two gaps 36 can likewise be formed.

All formations share the feature that each cigarette is supported on three sides (three-point support), each cigarette thus being held so that it cannot move.

The arrangement of the lugs 52, 53 and 54 for forming the gaps 36 in the upper layer c are represented in Figures 13 to 18 these arrangements corresponding to Figures 7 to 12. At the same time, the lugs are formed on the mouthpiece-like entry to the conveying passage 45, in each case as the beginning of the ribs 56, 57 which extend further.

If a layer a, b, or c is from the beginning furnished with a lower number of cigarettes than other layers one cigarette at the edge of the group must, in each case likewise be held back in the cigarette magazine. For this purpose, lugs 55 are located, depending on the formation selected, at the level of the central layer b (Figures 13, 14 and 15) or in the region of the upper layer a and/or the lower layer c (Figures 16, 17 and 18).

If a formation with a staggered arrangement of the cigarettes in adjacent layers (saddle position) is selected, the layer which is reduced by one cigarette at each end must, during the transport of the group 30 inside the conveying passage 45, be shifted transversely, relative to the cigarettes in the adjacent layers, by an amount corresponding to half the diameter of one cigarette. In addition the outer cigarettes of the entire group must be pushed together towards the centre, in order to eliminate the clearance resulting from the dimensions of the magazine shafts 39 and of the shaft walls 40.

In order to effect these relative movements of the cigarettes, the inner guide surfaces 59 and 60 of the side walls 41 and 42 are designed so that they converge in the conveying direction (Figure 4) in the region of the layers which must be pushed together merely to eliminate the clearance. In the region of the layer which is reduced by one cigarette, and which must, as a

whole, be shifted laterally (e.g. layer b in Figures 4 and 5), the rib 58 is provided, on one side, namely where the single cigarette was held back, this rib adjoining the lug 55 and acting as a "space-keeper" and having at the exit of the conveying passage 45, the dimension relative to the guide surface 59, equivalent to half the diameter of a cigarette. At the corresponding level on the opposite side, a displacing rib 61 is formed, which runs, inside the conveying passage 45, so that it converges in the conveying direction and thereby brings about an increasing transverse displacement of the layer in question during the transport movement.

With regard to the configuration and arrangement of the fingers 43, the pusher 38 is set up to satisfy the above-mentioned relationships. As can be seen from Figure 6, shallow fingers 43a are formed in the region of the cigarettes which are held back to form the gaps 36, in such a manner that only the end faces of two superimposed (lower) cigarettes are contacted. Where, for example in the central layer b a single cigarette, on the outside is held back, in order, by displacing the layer transversely, to ensure that staggered positioning, the finger 43b is formed like a fork, so that the corresponding part-fingers become effective in the region of the cigarettes in the upper and lower layers, while the cigarettes in the central layer are received into a slot in the finger 43b in question, and are accordingly not pushed out with the others. The finger 43c, on the opposite side, is shaped in a special manner. Here, a groove 62, extending in the longitudinal direction of the finger 43c, ensures that the cigarette at the edge of this layer is pushed out with the others. In the region of the conveying passage 45, the groove, which extends on the outside, receives the displacing rib 61.

In this appliance, the projections, lugs, ribs, etc., which are provided for holding cigarettes, are attached exclusively to strong supporting members which are capable of carrying loads, and not, in any event, to the thin and easily deformable shaft walls 40.

Claims

1. Cuboidal packet, made of a comparatively rigid packaging material, especially a hinge-lid packet, for receiving a group of cigarettes, cigarillos or the like in three layers, of which one layer is staggered with respect to the others, and, furthermore, at least one layer possesses n cigarettes, cigarillos or the like and one further layer possesses n-1 cigarettes, cigarillos or the like or fewer, in a manner such that, in the layer in question, gaps are formed, which in each case are bounded by two cigarettes, cigarillos or the like and have the dimensions of one cigarette, cigarillo or the like, the group being enclosed by an inner wrapper (a piece of precut foil), which possesses, on one side, a removable flap, wherein the outer layer located on the side opposite the flap exhibits gaps, which are caused by missing cigarettes, cigarillos or the like.

2. Packet according to claim 1, wherein the central layer possesses n cigarettes, cigarillos or the like, the layer, at the rear, remote from the flap, possesses $n-2$ or $n-3$ cigarettes, cigarillos or the like, and the other outer layer possesses $n-1$ cigarettes, cigarillos or the like.
3. Packet according to claim 1, wherein both the layer at the front, facing the flap, and the central layer possesses n cigarettes, cigarillos or the like, and the outer layer, at the rear, possesses a maximum of $n-2$ cigarettes, cigarillos or the like, these latter being staggered, in the transverse direction, with respect to those in the central layer (saddle position).
4. Packet according to claim 1, wherein the outer layers possess one cigarette, cigarillo or the like, occupying each of the four corners of the packet.
5. Packet according to Claim 1, wherein when n cigarettes, cigarillos or the like are arranged in the front layer, facing the flap, and $n-1$ cigarettes, cigarillos or the like in the central layer, and when the central layer is arranged to be staggered with respect to the outer layers, up to three gaps are formed in the rear layer.
6. Packet according to claim 1 and one or more of the additional claims, wherein each cigarette, cigarillo or the like is supported at three points, which are mutually staggered, the cigarettes, cigarillos or the like located in the corners of the packet being supported by a side wall and a rear wall of the packet, and by a cigarette, cigarillo or the like occupying a staggered position in the central layer.
7. Process for producing a group of cigarettes, cigarillos or the like, for packets according to one or more of claims 1 to 6, in particular by pushing the group out of a magazine, wherein the gaps are formed in that layer of the group which is on top when the group is pushed out, and the group is turned, before the packing operation, through 180° so that the layer with the gaps is pointed downwards.
8. Appliance for producing a group of cigarettes, cigarillos or the like, for packets according to one or more of claims 1 to 6, in particular by pushing a number of cigarettes corresponding to the group out of a magazine which possesses magazine shafts, arranged side by side and each intended to receive an upright row of cigarettes, cigarillos or the like wherein projections (lugs), protruding into the path on which the cigarettes, cigarillos or the like move, are attached to lateral or outer boundaries (upper wall) of the magazine, in the region from which the group of cigarettes is pushed out.
9. Appliance according to claim 8, wherein the lugs are arranged on a cross-member (upper wall), which is located on the exit side, above the group which is to be pushed out.
10. Appliance according to claim 8 or claim 9, wherein a conveying passage adjoins the magazine in the region from which the group is pushed out, the lugs being arranged on the upper wall of this passage.
11. Appliance according to claim 10 and one or more of the additional claims, wherein ribs adjoin the lugs inside the conveying passage these ribs serving as "space-keepers" for preserving the gaps.
12. Appliance according to claim 8 and one or more of the additional claims, wherein a turret adjoins the conveying passage, this turret revolving in the transverse plane and possessing a plurality of pockets, each intended to receive one group.
13. Appliance according to claim 11 and one or more of the additional claims, wherein the ribs are arranged so that they converge in the conveying direction inside the conveying passage.
14. Cuboidal packet for receiving a group of cigarettes, cigarillos or the like, substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of the accompanying drawings.
15. Process for producing a group of cigarettes, cigarillos or the like substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of the accompanying drawings.
16. Appliance for producing a group of cigarettes, cigarillos or the like substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of the accompanying drawings.